

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A collapsible handrail mechanism for steps or a ladder-- including:

an outer stringer and an inner stringer jointly pivotable about a pivot point;

a stanchion located between the outer and inner stringers and pivotally mounted to at least one of the stringers;

a latching mechanism through which the stanchion passes and to which at least one of the stringers is pivotally mounted at the said pivot point;

the latching mechanism having a slide plate ~~preventing~~ that prevents substantial downwards movement of the stanchion, a top plate preventing substantial upwards movement of the stanchion, and a side plate preventing substantial sideways movement of the stanchion;

wherein, in operation of the handrail mechanism from a stowed position, when the stringers are lowered the stanchion is thereby forced to slide on the slide plate causing the stanchion to pivot about its mounting up into an operational position.

2. (New) The collapsible handrail of claim 1, wherein the stanchion is pivotally mounted for rotation in a single plane.